

Reading Jewish Columnar Marriage Records in Russian

“How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

January 2023

GOAL

This guide will teach you how to extract information from Jewish marriage records.

INTRODUCTION

Jews in the Russian Empire were required to keep records of birth, marriage, and death beginning in 1835. These records were often recorded in both Russian (left-side of document) and in Hebrew/Yiddish (right-side of document). Although both sides of the document typically contain the same information, it's always a good idea to translate both sides, as there may be more information in one side as compared to the other. This “How to” Guide will address the side of the document recorded in Russian. In order to most effectively use this guide, you should be familiar with old Russian handwriting. If you are not, you may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- [The Russian Alphabet](#)
- [Deciphering the Handwriting and Understanding the Grammar](#)

HOW TO

Jewish vital records, or metrical books (метрические книги), for a particular location are typically organized by year, and then in four sections by record type (in some cases it may be organized first by record type and then year). Marriage records are found in the second section, and usually have a title page at the beginning of the section as seen in the examples below.



ЧАСТЬ II. — О БРАКОСОЧЕТАВШИХСЯ.							
№	Лѣта.		Кто совершилъ обрядъ обрученія и бракосочетанія (хипу).	Число и мѣсяцъ.		Главные акты или записи и обязательства между вступающими въ бракъ, и свидѣтели оныхъ.	Кто именно съ кѣмъ вступаетъ въ бракъ, также имена и состояніе родителей.
	Женска.	Мужеска.		Христіанскій.	Еврейскій.		
30	18	18	Раввинъ	28.	22	Католическіи свидѣтели: Сиркозскій мѣщанъ Иосифъ Миташинъ и сынъ городническаго Иосифъ Мраморскій.	Сиркозскій мѣщанъ Иосифъ Миташинъ и сынъ городническаго Иосифъ Мраморскій. Монахи Савинскіи Монахи Савинскіи Иосифъ Мраморскій Иосифъ Мраморскій Иосифъ Мраморскій

Image from: familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSSH-GS7P-N?i=331&cat=1019165

1. ENTRY NUMBER: The number in this column means that the couple was the xth couple married or recorded that year.

2. AGE: This column contains both the age of the bride and groom. The bride was recorded in the female column 2a and the groom's age was recorded in the male column 2b.

3. WHO PERFORMED THE MARRIAGE:

The name of the rabbi who performed the ceremony of betrothal and marriage is listed in this column. In many cases, the name of the rabbi may be written once at the top of the page, and then dittoed ("") down for the rest of the entries on the page. The name may also be written vertically across all columns on the page. Below is the Russian word for rabbi along with a handwritten example.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Rabbi	Раввин(ъ)	Раввинъ

4. DATE: The date column is divided into two sub columns – column 3a containing the date of the marriage according to the Christian calendar and column 3b containing the date according to the Hebrew calendar. In some cases, the month is only written at the top of the page, or even just once at the beginning of the month. You may need to scan the surrounding entries and/or pages to find the birth month. The examples below show the months of the Christian and Hebrew calendars in genitive case, which is most common in these records; however, you may find the months with different grammatical case endings, or even in an abbreviated form.

Christian Calendar Months

Month	Handwritten Example (Russian)	Month	Handwritten Example (Russian)
January января	Января	July июля	Июля
February февраля	Февраля	August августа	Августа
March марта	Марта	September сентября	Сентября
April апреля	Апреля	October октября	Октября
May мая	Мая	November ноября	Ноября
June июня	Июня	December декабря	Декабря

Hebrew Calendar Months and When they Usually Fall

Month	Handwritten Example (Russian)	Month	Handwritten Example (Russian)
Shevat (Jan-Feb)	Шват	Av (Jul-Aug)	Ув и Ава

Adar (Feb-Mar)	<i>Удара Адора</i>	Elul (Aug-Sept)	<i>Элула</i>
Nisan (Mar-Apr)	<i>Нисона</i>	Tishrei (Sep-Oct)	<i>Тышрей</i>
Iyyar (Apr-May)	<i>Ияр Айора</i>	Heshvan (Oct-Nov)	<i>Хешвана</i>
Sivan (May-Jun)	<i>Сивона</i>	Kislev (Nov-Dec)	<i>Кислева</i>
Tammuz (Jun-Jul)	<i>Таммуза</i>	Tevet (Dec-Jan)	<i>Тейвеса</i>

The birthplace of the child is recorded here. In some cases, if all children on a page were born in that location, the name of the location will be written sideways in the column across the entire page or dittoed ("") down for other entries on the page. For help deciphering locations, transliterate the town name and use the [JewishGen Communities Database](#) to help you determine the location.

5. DOCUMENTS/COMMITMENTS AND WITNESSES:

This column contains information regarding the Ketubah, a Jewish marriage contract. The ketubah also agrees upon a specific amount the groom is to pay the bride if the marriage is terminated for any reason. The amount is typically listed in the record (in silver rubles), followed by the names of the witnesses to the marriage.

Keep in mind that many of the words below are phonetic spellings of Ashkenazic pronunciations of Hebrew words. As such, you will encounter many spelling variations within documents.

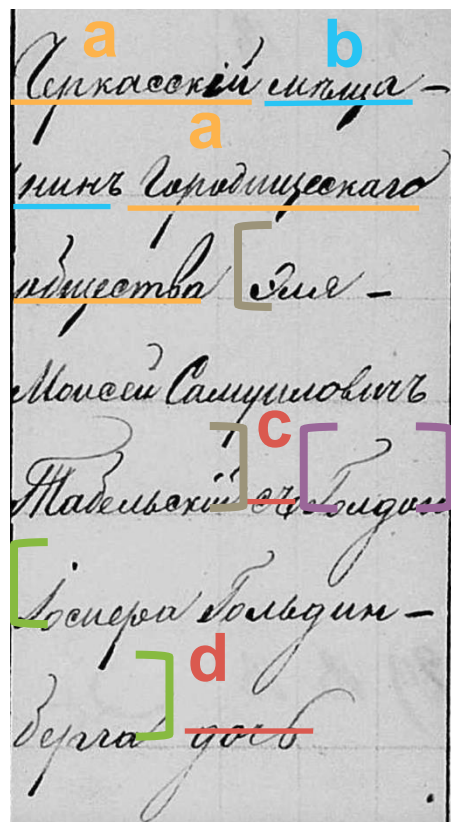
English	Russian Variations	Handwritten Example
Ketubah/כתובה (marriage contract)	Ксуба Ксиба etc.	<i>Ксиба</i>
Dauriita/דאורייתא (obligation to pay an amount of money if marriage is terminated)	дейойрайсы деурайса дерася etc.	<i>дейойрайсы</i>
Record	запись	<i>Запись</i>

Witnesses	свидетели	<i>свидѣтели</i>
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6. NAMES OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM AND THEIR PARENTS:

This column contains the name of the bride and the groom. Although the column title suggests that the marriage record should contain the names of the parents, this column generally only includes the name of the bride's father. It is important to note however, that name of the groom's father can often be inferred by using the patronymic (middle name derived from the given name of an individual's father) and the surname.

Format of information included in this column can vary, but the below are examples of general representations of the type of information included in this column.



Translation and Record Outline

[location]^a [social estate]^b [location]^a [Given name, patronymic and surname of groom] with [given name of bride] [given name and surname of bride's father] daughter.

*The groom's location/place of residence and social estate may be listed in two sections as shown here, or it may all come before the social estate.

a. Location: The paragraph typically begins with the residence (or place of registration) of the family. In some cases, the location may be in adjectival form (for example with a -овский or -янский ending), as shown in the example below. Remove the adjectival ending and use the [JewishGen Communities Database](https://www.jewishgen.com/communities/) to help you find the original shtetl name.

Жи́дыковскій → Жи́дыковскій → Жи́дыки

Жи́дыки = Zhidyki = Židikai, Lithuania

If a person was from a town located outside the district the record was recorded in, the district they were from (often in genitive case) may be listed, as shown in the example below.

*Бѣльскаго уѣзда
Немировскій*

Бѣльскаго уѣзда
Немировскій
Bielsk Uyezd (district)
Nemirov (Niemirow, Poland)

b. Social Estate: In the Russian Empire, each person had a certain place in society, known as their social estate or *soslovie*. They were often recorded in metrical books. The most common estate listed in records can be seen below. See the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#) for other variations. Keep in mind an occupation may be listed instead of a social estate. Again, see the Russian Genealogical Word List for help.

familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russian_Empire_Personal_Names#Patronymics

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Town Dweller/ Petty bourgeois	Мѣщан(ъ)/ Мѣщанин(ъ)	<i>мѣщанин</i>

c. With + Name of the Bride: The word с(ъ), which means with, appears between the groom's surname and the bride's given name. Note that because of the inclusion of this word, the bride's given name will appear in instrumental case. The instrumental case endings will need to be removed and replaced with the appropriate nominative case endings before putting the bride's name in your family tree.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
With	с(ъ)	<i>сѣ</i>

Голда

Голд^{ою} → Instrumental case ending
on bride's given name.

Remove instrumental case
endings

Голд → Голда (Golda)

Add
nominative
case ending

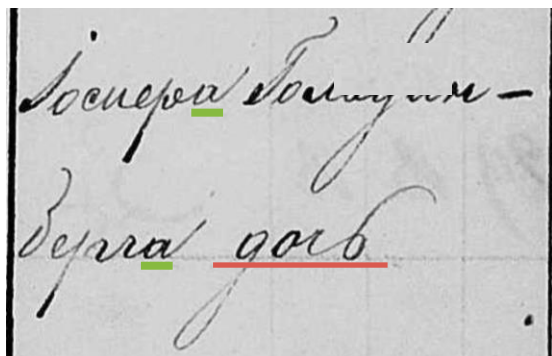
*Instrumental case implies that the groom
was married *to or with* the bride.

Nominative	Instrumental
-а**	-ой -ою

**If the stem ends in ж, ц, ч, ш, or щ,
the instrumental case ending will be -
ей in order to comply with spelling rules.

-я	-ей -ёй
-ь	-ью

d. Daughter of Father: Following the bride's given name is the father's name in genitive case. The father's name may be followed by the word for daughter as shown below. You will need to remove the genitive case endings from the father's name before adding him to your tree as shown in the example and grammar table below. Note that many surnames have an adjectival case ending (for example, names ending in -ski).



Иосифа Голдинберга дочь

↓
Father of the bride's name in
genitive case.

↓
daughter

*Genitive case implies that the bride was the
daughter of the father.

	Nominative	Genitive
Masculine (noun)	Ø (ends in a consonant) -й -ь	-а (-я)
Masculine (adjective)	-ый/-ий -ой	-ого/-аго
Neuter (noun)	-о (-ё/-е)	-а (-я)
Neuter (adjective)	-ое	-ого

Иосифа Голдинберга

↓ Remove genitive case endings

Iosif Goldinberg
(Josef Goldenberg)

Additional Vocabulary:

The following vocabulary may be helpful to you while reading Jewish marriage records. Translations and handwritten examples have been included.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Bride	Невеста/ Нивеста	
Widower	вдовець	

Widow	ВДОВОЮ	<i>Вдовою</i>
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JEWISH NAMES

Jews in the Russian Empire generally had three parts to their name: a given name, patronymic, and surname. Some individuals may have a double given name. See the charts below for common male and female given name handwritten examples.

A patronymic is a middle name derived from the given name of the person's father. These typically end in -ov (-ов) or -ovich (-ович) for males and -ova (-ова) or -ovna (-овна) for females. For more information about patronymics, see:

familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russian_Empire_Personal_Names#Patronymics.

A surname was passed through the male line and a woman adopted her husband's surname when she married. For more information on Jewish surnames as well as a list of Jewish surnames in the Russian Empire, see Alexander Beider's Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire.

Some handwritten examples of common Jewish given names can be found below. You may also wish to visit

jewishgen.org/ukraine/files/infosheets/L_Handwritten_Samples_of_Male_Given_Names.pdf or jewishgen.org/ukraine/files/infosheets/L_Handwritten_Samples_of_Female_Given_Names.pdf for additional names and examples.

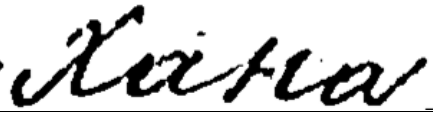




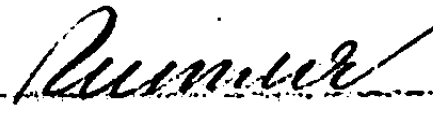


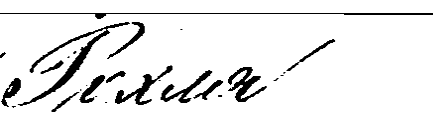
Common Male Names and Examples

Abraham Abram Avraham	Абрам(ъ)	<i>Абрамъ</i>
Aaron Aron Aharon	Арон(ъ)	<i>Аронъ</i>
Chaim	Хайм(ъ)	<i>Хаймъ</i>
David	Давид(ъ)	<i>Давидъ</i>
Gersh	Герш(ъ) Гершко	<i>Гершъ</i>

Isaac Yitzchak	Ицко Ицак(ъ)	Ицко
Joseph Josef Yoseph Yosef	Юсиф(ъ) Юсеф(ъ)	Юсиф(ъ)
Judah Juda Judka Yehuda	Юдка Юда	Юдка
Leib	Лайб(ъ)	Лайб(ъ)
Leizer	Лейзор(ъ)	Лейзор(ъ)
Meir Maier Mayer Meyer	Маер(ъ) МаѢр(ъ)	Маер(ъ)
Mendel	Мендель	Мендель
Moses Moshe Moyshe Mosko Moszka	Мошко	Мошко
Shmuel	Шмуль Шмуель	Шмуль
Wolf Volf	Вульф(ъ) Вольф(ъ)	Вульф(ъ)

Yankel Jacob	Янкел(ъ) Янкѣл(ъ)	
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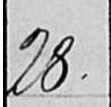
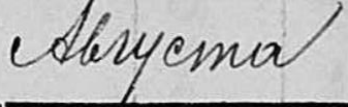
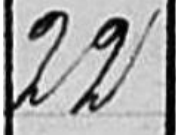
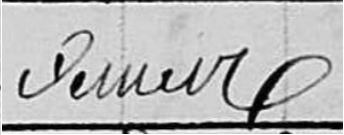
Common Female Names and Examples

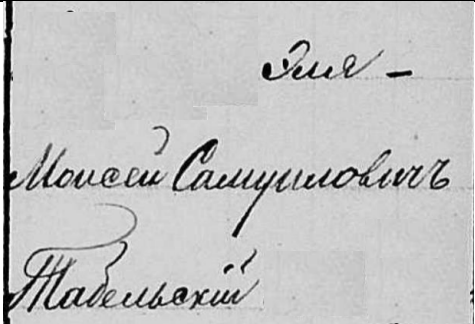
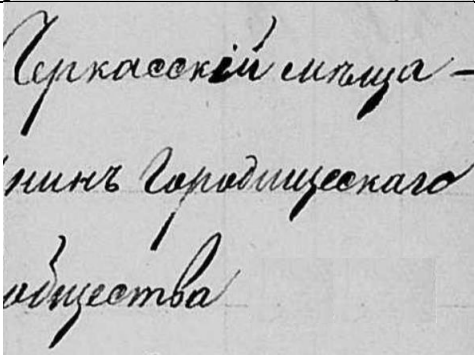
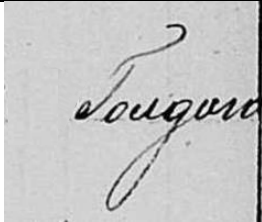
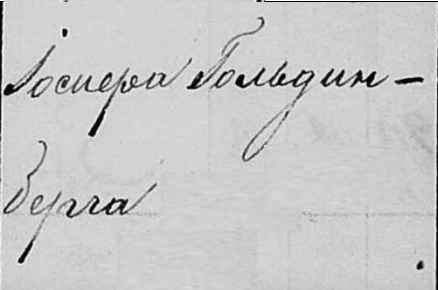
Chana Hannah	Хана	
Chaya Haya	Хая	
Deborah Devora Dworja	Двойра	
Esther Ester	Эстер(ъ)	
Feiga Feyga Fegi Feyge	Файга	
Gittel Gitel	Гитля	
Golda	Голда	
Leah Laya Leigh	Лая	
Rachel Rakhael Ruchla	Рохля Рухля	

		<i>Сурка</i>
Rebecca Rivka Riwka	Рывка Ривка Рифка	<i>Ривка</i>
Sarah Sara Sura	Сура Сара	<i>Сура</i>

PRACTICE

Now that we have learned about the key words, let's practice reading the record above by extracting the important genealogical details.

What was the age of the bride?	18			
What was the age of the groom?	18			
What was the date of marriage according to the Christian calendar?	28 August			
What was the date of marriage according to the Hebrew calendar?	22 Elul			

What was the name of the groom?	Elya-Mosei Samuilovich Tabelski (Эля-Моисей Самуилович Табельский)		
What was his place of registration and social estate?	Cherkassy Town dweller of the Horodyshche Community (Черкассь мещанинъ Городищскаго общества)		
What was the name of the bride?	Golda (Голда)		
Who was the bride's father?	Josef Goldinberg (Йосеф Гольдинберга)		

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! Click [here](#) to try out the Activity.